



Welcome Aboard Diego Garcia!

The atoll of Diego Garcia is in the Chagos Islands located on a large shoal area known as the Great Chagos Bank. Diego Garcia is the largest of 55 islands that form the Chagos Archipelago within the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and is known as the “Footprint of Freedom” for its shape, regional location, and strategic importance. The island is located seven degrees south of the equator very close to the geographic center of the Indian Ocean. Diego Garcia was discovered by Portuguese explorers in the early sixteenth century and its name is believed to have come from either an early explorer’s ship captain or its navigator. The island stretches about 38 miles tip to tip and has an average elevation of four feet above sea level with maximum elevation of 22 feet. The lagoon varies in depth from 10 to 100 feet. This lush, tropical island is home to an international population consisting primarily of Filipino and Mauritian contractors, and British and U.S. military.

Seasons are reversed compared to the United States and vary little, with year-round temperatures in the high 80’s during the day and lows at night in the 70’s. Diego Garcia boasts one of the highest precipitation rates in the world. It rains often with an annual precipitation of more than 100 inches, most occurring during the summer months of December through February.

Shallow reefs surround the island on the ocean side and are scattered inside the lagoon. Waters surrounding Diego Garcia are home to a vast variety of sea life with more than 800 species recorded. Snorkeling and water sports are available for recreation.

Wildlife on the island consists mainly of coconut, land and warrior crabs; small lizards and geckos; feral donkeys; a myriad of tropical birds, and many insects. All residents make every effort to

maintain the ecological integrity of Diego Garcia and as a result, all life forms on island, including live shellfish, are protected by British law.

Entry into Diego Garcia is restricted, requiring area clearance by U.S. Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia. Only unaccompanied military and DoD civilian personnel, or authorized contractors may be assigned to the island. Neither military nor DoD couples are allowed concurrent assignments to Diego Garcia. As a British territory, all military and civilian personnel residing on the island come under BIOT law and administration. These laws differ from those in the United States.

Things to Do BEFORE PCSing to Diego Garcia

1. Take care of all possible medical and dental problems that may not have been taken care of during overseas screening. Bring an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses. Obtain a one-year supply of prescription medication since on-island supplies are limited. Consult a sponsor regarding availability of medication at the Diego Garcia Branch Health Clinic.
2. Change current mailing address with the U.S. Postal Service and regular mailings. Mail from the U.S. regularly takes 2 weeks. Take this into account bills that may have specific due dates. Consider paying bills online or via direct debit.
3. Ensure all financial affairs are in order.
4. Set up temporary guardianship for minor family members if necessary.
5. Consult a Legal Office to assist with necessary powers-of-attorney for items such as real estate, automobiles, taxes, litigation, loco parentis, etc., for any issue that may arise during a tour.
6. Ensure Living Will and Last Will and Testament are current and valid.
7. Register to vote and request an absentee ballot for any elections for the following year. Diego Garcia has a Voting Assistance Officer to provide absentee ballot requests. Visit www.FVAP.gov for more information.
8. Keep in contact with a sponsor at all times. Let them know travel arrangements, arrival times, and any other information that may be needed to assist with the journey.
9. Renew Common Access Card or DoD identification if within 6 months of expiration beyond end of tour date.
10. Renew driver's license if it is within a year of expiration.

14. Address. *Confirm with a sponsor which post office box number will be assigned.* The official command address is:

First Name Last Name

PSC 466 Box 2

FPO AP 96595

Travel Notes: (1) No clothing, hats, or belt buckles with slogans or insignia that may draw attention to your status as an American military/civilian member should be worn. (2) Profanity, maliciousness, or any other negative behavior that may bring discredit to yourself or the United States are prohibited and may be punished as the Uniform Code of Military Justice allows.

Customs & Immigration

Diego Garcia is subject to British customs and immigration laws. Strict control is maintained on importation of drugs and related items, weapons, which include: knives with blades more than 3 inches, spear guns, firearms and explosives; and pornography in print, video, or digital. Severe penalties are awarded for violation of British customs laws.

As a matter of routine, all medication, including aspirin and vitamins, will be confiscated and inspected. You should identify all medication to ensure its return. In accordance with regulation, no type of attire with degrading or obscene comments may be worn or brought to Diego Garcia. This includes pictures, phrases or slogans depicting drug paraphernalia, anti-war slogans, ethnic slurs, or having sexual connotations. Publications that depict biker/hippie culture or mercenary magazines will be confiscated, as will all obscene publications. All videotapes brought into Diego Garcia will be retained by British Customs for screening and returned within 10 days if approved. Prohibited materials will be destroyed. ***When clearing customs, PCS or TDY orders, and a Common Access Card or valid DoD ID are required.***

Items to Bring

Passports

It is recommended that all personnel attached to Diego Garcia obtain a U.S. Tourist Passport (blue cover). U.S. Official Passports may be used while traveling on official business to some countries in the region; however, they are not recognized by some nations in Southeast Asia. Also, Official Passports cannot be used for leisure travel. Singapore now requires a passport for all U.S. military not traveling on orders and must have a Tourist Passport in order to travel on leave. There is no location to obtain a Tourist Passport outside the United States; therefore, passports must have at least 6 months beyond from end of tour date for continuity.

Civilian Attire

Shorts and t-shirts with sandals or sneakers are the most popular civilian attire on the island. Consider bringing dress clothes; shirts with collars and dress pants, or dresses for special events, church, or dining. Collared shirts are required for men participating in all activities in the Officer's Club. The Diego Garcia Ship's Store has a limited selection of clothing, shoes, undergarments, and sportswear, but items may be ordered online.

Sports/Leisure Equipment

Bicycles are required to have a front white headlight, red rear taillight, reflectors, and a bell/horn. Wearing a helmet is required. Consider bringing softball equipment, snorkel gear, fishing equipment, bowling ball, roller skates/blades, golf clubs, personal weightlifting gear, tennis or racquetball rackets, athletic shoes, beach/lounge chairs, and beach blankets. Morale, Welfare and Recreation loans or rents a variety of athletic and outdoor recreation equipment. Ask a sponsor for a list of available items. It is preferable to bring personally owned equipment.

Personal Items

Computer, board games, reading material, magazines, digital music players, or stereo, CD's, DVD's, and preferred brands of hygiene products are encouraged. Bring a sturdy umbrella as well. It rains often and the rain is usually heavy. Sunscreen and sunglasses with good UV protection are necessary. Bedding is provided; however, personal specifications and requirements need to be taken into account since government provided pillows, sheets and blankets meet a minimum standard.

Life on Diego Garcia

Accommodations

No one will share a room. Each room is fully furnished and includes a refrigerator, microwave, telephone, television, DVD player, alarm clock, iron with board, and a private shower. Officers and Chiefs are provided rooms that include kitchenettes. Bedding is included in all rooms. Rooms vary somewhat in furnishings, but all will have a recliner or loveseat, dinette set, and moderate closet space and dresser drawers. Unaccompanied Housing (UH) has grills and picnic tables available to residents. Contact and ask a sponsor to determine from UH management the size of room and bed, full or queen-size, to be assigned. This will help determine an amount of personal items to include in UB allowance.

Communicating

Telephone: The commercial/private phone system is operated by a local phone company. Phone cards must be purchased to call off the island. Phone cards purchased stateside will not work on Diego Garcia. Phone calls are a minimum of \$.55 per minute and vary depending on time of day.

Internet: Private, in-room Internet access is available. DSL service is relatively expensive with lower data transfer rates in comparison to similar service available elsewhere in the world; however, the operating company relies solely on satellite signals to provide a digital feed, which is expensive to maintain. DSL modems may be purchased, although many detaching personnel sell theirs at a significantly reduced price. Phone cards may also be used in several wireless hotspots around the island with personal electronic devices. Internet Café computers sponsored by Morale, Welfare and Recreation may be used for personal use, free of charge at several locations.

U.S. Postal Service: Diego Garcia is home to the only U.S. Post Office in the Indian Ocean. The average time for mail to and from U.S. is about 2 weeks, but may be longer. Off-island postage rates are the same as stateside. Visit the U.S. Postal Service website for a list of items restricted for shipping: <https://www.usps.com/ship/shipping-restrictions.htm>. There is a British Post Office on island as well that sells BIOT stamps. Regular letter postage to the United Kingdom is \$.97. Delivery time is similar to that of U.S. Postal Service.

Finances

Checks: Navy Federal Credit Union has a branch on the island open to all active duty personnel and DoD civilians. The bank can handle most transactions and loan procedures, but does not handle cash. They can issue a bank draft from personal accounts that may be cashed by Community Bank that will cash checks up to \$500 per day for a fee of \$1. The Turner Club cash cage will cash personal checks up to \$100 per day. The Diego Garcia Ship's Store will accept checks for \$40 in cash with purchase.

Cash: Most establishments will only accept cash, including all clubs and dining facilities. Checks, MasterCard and Visa are accepted in Diego Garcia Ship's Store. Discover Card and American Express are not accepted on-island. All transactions on-island are in U.S. dollars.

ATM: There are two automatic tellers on the island. One is located in Navy Gateway Inns and Suites; the other is in AMC Passenger Terminal.

Island Shopping

The only store on the island is the Diego Garcia Ship's Store. Although Ship's Store is supported by Navy Exchange Command (NEXCOM), it does not accept Exchange or Star credit cards. It carries a limited array of electronics, sporting gear, personal items, gifts, clothing, and is Diego Garcia's only grocery store. Although small, it carries a variety of food items that will meet most needs. It also offers a direct line to NEXCOM Uniform Support Center used to call in a uniform order for delivery. NEXCOM Uniform Support Center requires credit card purchases. As mentioned previously, MasterCard and Visa are accepted at Ship's Store as well as cash or personal checks.

Movies

Morale, Welfare and Recreation operates an outdoor, covered movie theater that shows first-run films released in Diego Garcia simultaneously to most U.S. theatres. Movies are shown daily free of charge. A variety of snacks and drinks are sold at the theater.

Newspaper

The Tropical Times is the local island military news/events newspaper. Produced by the NSF Public Affairs Office, it is published bi-monthly and is distributed to various places around the installation.

TV/Radio

TV: Armed Forces Network (AFN) provides 9 television stations and a variety of radio stations. These channels provide music, sports, news and entertainment 24 hours daily.

Radio: AFN also operates a local radio station with an AM (1485) and 2 FM (99.1 and 101.9) frequencies that broadcast live shows Monday through Saturday and off-island entertainment throughout the week.

Web Presence/ Social Media

1. Our official website is at:

http://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnrj/installations/nsf_diego_garcia.html

2. Follow us on Facebook at: a. U.S. Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia

b. MWR Diego Garcia

c. AFN Diego Garcia

Personal Services

Unless otherwise noted, some of these services are free of charge to military and civilian personnel.

1. The Beauty Shop offers hair styling, manicures, pedicures and facials.

2. Barber Shop

3. Uniform laundry service; cleaning, pressing, and up to 6 personal items per week will be cleaned and pressed.

4. Uniform tailoring and up to 5 personal items per week can be tailored, mended, etc.

5. Professional massage therapy at the Fitness Center. Massages are by appointment for \$25 per hour.

6. Print personal photographs at the Photo Lab for a nominal fee.

Note: While not required, tips are strongly encouraged.

Dining

1. **The Officer's Club** is open to all hands. It sits at the tip of the island on Eclipse Point and has a beautiful view of both the Indian Ocean and lagoon and offers a full service menu. The Officer's Club features daily specials including Mongolian BBQ, Wing Night, and Build Your Own Pizza. The O'Club also offers an amazing Sunday brunch.
2. **Reindeer Station** offers room delivery that is available to any building from the downtown area to Air Operations Tower.
3. **Island Room** is the site for large all-island parties, dinners, and special events.
4. **The Food Court** includes Smash Hit Subs that offers sub sandwiches and wraps; Hot Stuff Pizza and C-Street Café that features freshly baked goods and Starbucks® Coffee.
5. **Peacekeeper Inn** carries a full menu of favorites including fried chicken, spaghetti, burgers, sandwiches, and features Filipino cuisine and daily lunch specials.
6. **AMC Passenger Terminal Snack Bar** accommodates those incoming and outgoing passengers with a variety of sandwiches and drinks.
7. **United Seamen's Service Center** offers a variety of menu items as well as daily specials. This Mariner facility can accommodate large groups for special functions and is open to All Hands.
8. The Consolidated Dining Facility, affectionately known as **Seven Degrees South Café**, is open to all hands, including civilians, and is recognized as one of the finest dining facilities in the Navy.

Getting Around Diego Garcia

Personally owned vehicles are not allowed, which means the primary mode of transportation are buses, bicycles, and old-fashioned foot power. Buses travel at regular intervals throughout the inhabited areas of the island. Base taxis and government vehicles also travel Diego Garcia, but are for official use only. All buildings in downtown are within walking distance of Unaccompanied Housing. Bicycles are very popular and are monitored with strict safety rules. A bell or horn is required on bikes and a front white and rear red light are mandatory when riding after dark. Helmet with the chin strap fastened is required at all times. BIOT Police will issue a hefty fine to anyone riding without a helmet. The Bicycle Repair Shop provides services at a nominal fee, including preparing a bike to ride after it arrives on island!

Recreation

Fitness Center: The Fitness Center is open 0500–2300 on most days and includes basketball courts; combination volleyball/basketball court; Nautilus fitness center; free-weight room; cardio room with treadmills, stationary bikes and cross trainers; locker rooms and an equipment issue center.

Outdoor activities: Located next to the Fitness Center are 2 lighted softball fields and 6 horseshoes pits. Outdoor volleyball courts are located at Jake's Place, the Short Pier, and UH areas. A lighted softball field, 2 lighted basketball courts and 2 lighted volleyball courts are located at the Fleet Recreation Center.

Tennis/Racquetball: Three indoor racquetball courts and 5 lighted tennis courts are available next to the Fitness Center. Two lighted tennis courts are located at the Fleet Recreation Center.

Golf: Coral Sands Golf Course is an executive (Par 30), 9-hole golf course. Coral Sands rents full sets of clubs; however, golfers are encouraged to bring their own. There is also a driving range available for use for a nominal fee.

Bowling: Diego Garcia has its own modern, four-lane bowling alley. Located next to the Turner Complex, it is fully equipped with lockers and a snack bar.

Extreme conditioning programs such as Crossfit, Insanity and P90X are not permitted in or around fitness facilities, to include outdoor fields.

Fishing: Fishing is a popular activity in Diego Garcia. Whether trolling for yellowfin tuna and wahoo, bottom fishing for grouper and red snapper, or enjoying a relaxing day of casting from shore, there is no better place in the world to fish. Offshore fishing excursions and fishing pole rentals are available from Morale, Welfare and Recreation.

Swimming Pool: A 25-meter swimming pool is located near the Fitness Center and has marked swimming lanes for exercise and a free swim area with a diving board.

Water Sports: The Marina rents powerboats, sailboats, canoes, windsurfers, paddle boards and kayaks. Free classes are offered on a regular basis and are required for powerboats and sailboats.

Parks: Diego Garcia has many parks to picnic with a small group or a whole command. All parks have covered dining tables/areas and BBQ pits.

Events: Regular sports tournaments, races, contests, fishing competitions, and other events for all island residents with T-shirts included for participants. Sports leagues form throughout the year.

Live Entertainment: Clubs provide live entertainment and off-island talent for special engagements.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can my family visit me in Diego Garcia?

No. Access to Diego Garcia is limited to official visitors and mission essential personnel only. Family members are not authorized to travel to Diego Garcia; this includes, but is not limited to dependents and spouses.

Q. Is there anything that I cannot bring to Diego Garcia?

Yes. This is a brief list of what cannot be brought to BIOT:

1. Goods or material of any description containing or consisting of any species of living plant, animal or insect not indigenous to the territory.
2. Drugs and controlled substances, including equipment used for weighing, processing or administering of drugs.
3. Knives and weapons including catapults, spear guns or diving knives. Any knife with a fixed blade or a blade bigger than 3 inches will be confiscated. Merchant seamen shall declare work knives.

4. Firearms of any kind, including guns, air-guns, or other lethal barreled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or object can be discharged.
5. All types of explosives, including fireworks, empty shells and cartridge casings.
6. Pornographic magazines or videos are not allowed. Materials outside the standards set by British law will be destroyed.
7. No more than 200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco for personal use and is contained in the baggage accompanying a person arriving in BIOT.

Visit the U.S. Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia website for more information on contraband.

Q. Can I ship my Personally Owned Vehicle to Diego Garcia?

No. Personnel will have access to vehicles for official travel. Taxi and bus services are available free of charge, seven days a week for on-island travel requiring a vehicle.

Q. Will my mobile phone work in Diego Garcia?

No. Commercial, U.S. based mobile phone providers are not accessible.

Q. Will my Navy Marine Corps Internet (NMCI) Microsoft Outlook & Office files, applications, and external memory devices work in OCONUS Navy Enterprise Network (ONE-Net)?

ONE-Net does utilize all standard Navy and DoD software applications, including Microsoft Outlook & Office; however, neither personal external memory devices nor those registered with NMCI are allowed to connect with ONE-Net workstations. Outlook .pst and all other files must be written to DVD or CD in order to upload to any ONE-Net workstation. Applications that are not registered and utilized with ONE-Net will require special permissions prior to loading onto ONE-Net. Sponsors can direct special requests to the proper office codes.

Q. What would I do if I forgot to pack anything for this tour?

Diego Garcia Ship's Store sells common products; toiletries, snacks, laundry detergent, and even some cookware. Additionally, online shopping is commonly used to order anything not sold in Ship's Store.

Q. Where can I find out more information about Diego Garcia?

Visit the official website at <http://www.cnic.navy.mil/DiegoGarcia/index.htm> or look for U.S. Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia and MWR Diego Garcia on Facebook. Contact a sponsor and ask specific questions based on your professional and personal interests prior to departing.

<i>Diego Garcia Pre-arrival Checklist</i>			
PCS/TDY Orders (3 copies)		Passport*	
Medical/Dental Records		Power(s) of Attorney	
Year-supply of Prescriptions		Valid/Current Will	
Eyewear (primary & spare)		Full Sea Bag	
Current CAC or DoD ID*		Cash	
Current Driver's License**		ATM Card/Checkbook	
Update Postal Address		Register for Absentee Voting	
Temporary Guardianship		Proper Civilian Attire	
Personal/Leisure Items		Shorts	
Laptop/Tablet		Conservative T-shirts	
Reading Materials		Sandals	
Board Games		Dress Slacks/Dress	
Stereo/Portable Music		Collared Shirts	
CD/DVD		Swimwear	
Black Umbrella		Beach Attire	
Sunscreen		Sports Equipment	
Kitchen Items/Spices		Softball Glove/Bat/Cleats	
Coffee Maker		Bicycle/Helmet/Gloves	
Stationary/Cards		Bike Lights	
Sunglasses		Rollerblades/Skates/Helmet	
Nutritional Supplements		Snorkel Gear (mask, fins, gloves)	
Room		Water Shoes	
Wireless Router		Soccer Gear	
Comforter Set (full or queen)		Tennis Gear	
Room Décor		Racquetball gear	
Extra Pillows		Fishing Equipment	

*Documents must have 6 months remaining from end of tour date to be considered valid.

**License must have 1 year remaining to be considered valid.



DOWN TOWN MAP

